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SUBJECT: EASTERN DRC NOTES - APRIL 24

¶1. The items contained in this report consist principally of spot information from various sources. This report is not exhaustive, nor can all the information contained therein be confirmed at this time.

Security Situation

¶2. (SBU) Based on movements of LRA cadre, MONUC believes the rebels are regrouping near Farade and Bitima. Another group of approximately 130 which could include Kony, is reportedly encamped on the eastern fringes of Garamba Park.

¶3. (SU) In Ituri, FPJC troops killed 7 FARDC soldiers in an ambush near Tchomia on the western shore of Lake Edward. There were no reports of FPJC casualties. (Comment: although a sideshow to the anti-DLR and anti-LRA operations, the campaign against armed groups in Ituri frequently involves combat and casualties. End comment.)

South Kivu Integration

¶4. (SBU) The pace of integration in South Kivu remains slow, but Mai Mai groups continue to trickle in to regroupment centers. At the Luberizi camp, a total of 319 cadres have arrived, including 93 Zaboloni Mai Mai and 226 Shikito Mai Mai. Twenty-four child soldiers were among the combatants. MONUC intends to open another regroupment center at Kalehe on April 28. The FARDC still refuse to join the integration process, delaying the planned opening of a camp at Mwenge.

SRSG Doss on the FDLR, Human Rights, the CNDP, and SSR

¶5. (SBU) Following an April 23 visit to Lufuo, RSG Alan Doss reported to Goma-based diplomats that the FARDC had pushed the FDLR out of the town and that most residents had returned home. (Comment: it is doubtful that the FDLR ever intended to occupy Lufuo, a town with a population of 14,000. End comment.) Doss noted that the FDLR practice "tactics of fear" in the region, telegraphing retribution intentions ahead of attacks in an effort to terrorize the population. MONUC had recently moved its base out of Lufuo to Kurumba (population of 60,000), which has also been threatened by the FDLR, but has now moved a contingent back into Lufuo. Doss and other observers speculate that some of the FDLR fighters may have commercial motivations. They dominated commerce in the area until they were pushed back into the forests; many local residents owe them money, and the FDLR may be reminding them that payment is still due.

¶6. (SBU) While the FDLR remains capable of raids and terror, Doss said it has not reoccupied many of the areas it dominated before Operation Umoja Wetu. (Comment: this may not apply to the more remote areas north of Walikale. End comment.) Doss believes there

will be more reprisals and acknowledges that the FDLR will not disappear as a result of Kimia II. Nevertheless, action against the rebels is essential to break their hold on large parts of the Kivus and to cement improved DRC-Rwanda relations.

¶7. (SBU) Doss said he had spoken with FARDC General Amuli about FARDC abuses against the population. Amuli, according to Doss, recognized that the GDRC is fighting a counter-insurgency, which would not succeed without the support of the local population. Some commanders (probably a reference to Colonel Delphin) are notorious for perpetrating abuses.

¶8. (SBU) According to Doss, non-payment of salaries remains the most pressing problem in the FARDC. Doss suggested that EUSEC might encourage distribution of pay at the company or battalion level. In Doss' opinion, the current practice of disbursing the entire payroll to brigade commanders allows for too many opportunities for graft and delay. The next priority should be to encourage the FARDC to return to barracks, with weapons locked up except when deployed.

¶9. (SBU) CHOD General Etumba told Doss that he was prepared to restart training for the FARDC in July, and was prepared for a six-month training cycle for many of the recently integrated troops. Doss agreed that continuing operations against the FDLR should not divert the FARDC from the need to implement Security Sector Reform (SSR). Doss said he would seek trainers from Swahili-speaking countries, as it is the most common language for troops in the Eastern DRC. He noted that the UNSC has provided funding and authorization to immediately begin SSR. (Comment: SSR came off track when the CNDP emerged as a threat, and donors should not allow the GDRC to use the FDLR as an excuse for further procrastination.

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End comment.)

¶10. (SBU) Reporting on his recent meeting with local CNDP leadership, Doss said they were committed to a political role. They have grievances, notably the failure of the GDRC to convene the Steering Committee to implement recent agreements, but none of these concerns were "dealbreakers," in Doss' view. The CNDP has, however, contacted Obasanjo to express its concerns; Obasanjo's aide, General Sumbeiywo, will travel to Goma on April 27 to follow up on implementation. Doss recommended a "light structure" for tracking implementation, rather than the multi-tiered structure of the Amani program. The CNDP would keep its political grievances separate from its military grievances. (Comment: although CNDP officers have done well in the division of commands in the FARDC, we estimate that up to 10% of the rank and file have already deserted the FARDC. End comment.)

¶11. (SBU) Doss said he would soon return to New York to brief the Security Council on his findings. He intends to report progress, but note the many areas where problems could derail the process. He is encouraged that the UNSC is relatively united in its view of the conflict.

¶12. (SBU) Comment: The SRSG has a solid understanding of recent dynamics in the east, and does not appear overly concerned that the UN has been frequently sidelined in negotiating agreements. He may be a bit optimistic about Kimia II's ability to weaken FDLR capabilities. He is correct in understanding that further action against the FDLR is key to maintaining momentum in DRC-Rwanda relations. End comment.

GARVELINK